

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method for communicating with a device selected from the group consisting of programmable logic controllers (PLC) and I/O devices, said method comprising the steps of:

5 interconnecting the device to a personal computer (PC) running a web browser; and

running an application on the PC that launches the web browser to an initial page and uploads a web browser applet or active x object from the device to the PC via the interconnection.

10 2. A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising the step of electronically communicating data between the PC and the device, under control of the web browser and web browser applet or active x object.

15 3. A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the PC is in communication with a server on a network, the interconnection between the device and the personal computer is separate from the network, and further comprising the step of the PC automatically retrieving data specified by the web browser applet or active x object from the server on the network.

4. A method in accordance with Claim 3 wherein the data retrieved from the server on the network comprises information about the device.

20 5. A method in accordance with Claim 4 further comprising the step of displaying the information about the device in a web browser window.

6. A method in accordance with Claim 3 wherein the data retrieved from the server on the network comprises an executable application, and further comprising the step of executing the executable application.

25 7. A method in accordance with Claim 3 further comprising the step of downloading the data received from the server to the device.

8. A method in accordance with Claim 3 further comprising the step of transferring data from the device to the server via the web browser.

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5 9. A method in accordance with Claim 3 wherein the device is electronically coupled to a plurality of intelligent modules, and further comprising the step of selectively communicating data between the intelligent modules and the server, via the device, the interconnection, the web browser, and the web browser applet or active x object.

10 10. A method in accordance with Claim 1 and further comprising the step of automatically retrieving data specified by the web browser applet or active x object from the PC to the device.

10 11. A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising the step of transferring data from the device to the PC via the web browser.

15 12. A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the device is electronically coupled to a plurality of intelligent modules, and further comprising the step of selectively communicating data between the intelligent modules and the PC, via the device, the interconnection, the web browser, and the web browser applet or active x object.

15 13. A system configured to allow indirect communication with a network, said system comprising:

a computer;

20 a device without an network interface selected from the group consisting of programmable logic controllers (PLC) and I/O devices, said device further comprising a web browser applet or active x object; and

an interconnection between said computer and said device,

25 said computer configured with an interface to the network, a web browser, and an application that launches the web browser to an initial page and uploads the web browser applet or active x object from the device to the computer via said interconnection.

30 14. A system in accordance with Claim 13 wherein the web browser and web browser applet or active x object are configured to control electronic data communication between said computer and said device.

A/ 15. A system in accordance with Claim 13 wherein said computer configured to communicate with a server on a network, wherein said interconnection between said device and said computer is separate from the network.

5 16. A system in accordance with Claim 15 wherein said computer further configured to automatically retrieve data specified by the web browser applet or active x object from the server on the network.

17. A system in accordance with Claim 16 wherein the data retrieved from the server on the network comprises information about said device.

10 18. A system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said computer configured to display the information about said device in a web browser window.

19. A system in accordance with Claim 16 wherein the data retrieved from the server on the network comprises an executable application, said computer configured to execute the executable application.

15 20. A system in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said computer configured to download the data received from the server to said device.

21. A system in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said computer configured to transfer data from said device to the server via the web browser.

20 22. A system in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said device configured to be electronically coupled to a plurality of intelligent modules, said computer configured to selectively communicate data between the intelligent modules and the server, via said device, said interconnection, the web browser, and the web browser applet or active x object.

25 23. A system in accordance with Claim 13 wherein said computer configured to automatically transfer data specified by the web browser applet or active x object from said computer to said device.

24. A system in accordance with Claim 13 wherein said computer configured to transfer data from said device to said computer via the web browser.

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